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MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: The Moro Kidnaping and Italian Politics

1. One of the last governments headed by the veteran Christian Democratic politician Aldo Moro spanned the period from the breakup of the old center-left coalition in 1974 to the electoral surge toward the Communists in 1975. The transitional nature of Moro's government led Italian politicians to dub it a "bridge to the unknown". Now, the kidnaping of the party leader by the Red Brigades terrorist organization is forcing Italian politicians to bridge a new political abyss. The many questions raised by the case could lead to fundamental changes in the country's politics.

2. Six weeks after the kidnaping, an air of uncertainty and distrust pervades Italian political life. This results in part from Moro's absence; no one else is equipped to play his stabilizing role in Christian Democratic internal politics and in the party's relations with the Communists. It also reflects widespread frustration over the government's inability to find Moro.

3. Moro was abducted just as the Christian Democrats and Communists completed two months of delicate negotiations on a new governing formula. Although the talks had produced an agreement under which the Communists support Prime Minister Andreotti's Christian Democratic minority government in parliament, many contentious details concerning relations between the two parties still had not been spelled out.

4. Preoccupation with the crime has since prevented anyone from addressing these outstanding questions in a systematic way. When politicians do take up such issues, they will have to deal with two emerging trends--trends that work against each other and contribute to the confused political atmosphere. On the one hand, the emergency nature of the situation is pushing the Christian Democrats and Communists

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toward closer cooperation. On the other hand, distrust and tensions are growing between the two parties.)

(5. Andreotti has consulted the Communists closely in connection with the investigation. [redacted])

[redacted] Communist chief Beringuer and other party leaders, including the directorate member responsible for security affairs, are in [redacted] contact with the Christian Democratic leadership regarding the kidnapping. In addition, [redacted]

[redacted] some members of the cabinet, although probably not Pandolfi, plan to consult directly with their counterparts in the Communist Party before completing major administrative actions.)

6. At the same time, relations between the two parties are marked by growing tension. The Communists, for example, have been publicly critical of the government's lack of progress in the case (and, [redacted]) have bluntly told Interior Minister Cossiga to move more vigorously against the terrorists.)

(7. For their part, the Christian Democrats are [redacted] planning to charge during a coming series of local elections that the Communist Party's antagonism toward the security forces years ago was the direct antecedent of the current political violence. This is bound to touch an exposed nerve in the Communist Party, which publicly admits to an earlier complacency about left-wing violence but argues that terrorism has its real roots in the government's long neglect of fundamental social and economic problems.)

8. The tension reflects the absence of Moro's steadying influence both on his own party and on its relations with the Communists. Moro's fine-tuning of Christian Democratic-Communist relations was one of his major contributions to Italian politics.

(9. Increasingly, however, Italian politicians are saying the humiliating letters Moro has written from captivity have finished him politically, whether or not he survives physically. That conclusion seems premature, but it will nevertheless stimulate increased rivalry and maneuvering among Christian Democrats anxious to succeed Moro as party chief and to assume his role as front runner in the December presidential election. It seems likely also to encourage renewed activity on the part of a substantial group of the Christian Democrats who want the party to pursue a policy of confrontation with the Communists but who were outmaneuvered by Moro in the final days of the government crisis.)

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10. The Christian Democrats have not said much officially about relations with the Communists since the kidnaping, other than to stress their refusal to go beyond the degree of collaboration represented by the arrangements on which the Andreotti government is based. [But the Christian Democrats' resolve in this regard is contingent on a variety of developments, not the least of which is the outcome of the Moro affair. If it drags on or if violence escalates, tougher law-and-order measures may be required, and the Christian Democrats will need Communist acquiescence to enact them.]

11. Moreover, the Christian Democrats still have no realistic alternative to collaboration with the Communists--a fact underlined by the recent Socialist Party congress. The Socialists--the only party that could give the Christian Democrats a non-Communist majority--made it clear that a return to such an alliance any time soon is extremely unlikely.

12. The local elections set for May 14-15 will also affect inter-party relations. The elections will involve about 10 percent of the electorate--the first significant sampling of voter sentiment since the Communists' unprecedented gains in the 1976 parliamentary elections.

13. As such, the contests will be studied closely for some indications of how the country has reacted to the period of Christian Democratic-Communist cooperation that began in a formal sense with the installation of Andreotti's previous government two months after the 1976 election.

[14. If the Communists lose substantially, the Christian Democratic hierarchy will be confirmed in its belief that the Communists' growing involvement in government decisionmaking has the beneficial side effect of hurting them at the polls. But such a result would also pose a dilemma for the Christian Democrats, because it would cause the Communists to question whether they can afford further cooperation with Andreotti, who will clearly need their help in the months ahead.]

[15. A Communist gain on the other hand--in conjunction with either a Christian Democratic loss or a further gravitation of the voters toward the two large parties at the expense of the smaller ones--would ease some of Communist leader Berlinguer's internal party problems and cause the Christian Democrats to reassess their strategy.]

16. Of the many questions raised for Italian politics by the Moro kidnaping, the most important clearly centers on the effect the affair

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is likely to have on the internal cohesion of the Christian Democratic Party and on its ability to remain Italy's major political force.

[17. So far, the affair appears to have accelerated two trends that were already threatening to immobilize the Christian Democrats. On the one hand, it has increased the internal party strains that Moro worked so hard to keep in check. At the same time, it has made it even more difficult for the Christian Democrats to credibly use anti-Communism as a unifying force. Many Christian Democrats had become more open to cooperation with the Communists even before the present emergency set in and the longer it extends the more difficult it will be for those who remain opposed to that cooperation to make their case.]

[18. All of this seems likely to further weaken the Christian Democrats' effectiveness as a governing party. And the persistence of present trends could ultimately create a political vacuum that would draw the Communists into greater governmental responsibilities--even though they are not pushing hard for them at the moment.]

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